

Explanations

Inversion

The term inversion covers two different grammatical operations.

- Using a question form of the main verb
*Not only **did he fail** to report the accident, but also later denied that he had been driving the car.*
*Never **have I enjoyed** myself more!*

- Changing the normal positions of verb and subject
*Along the street **came a strange procession**.*
 See Grammar 14 for an explanation of this example.

Inversion after negative adverbials

- This only occurs when the adverbial occurs at the beginning of a clause. All the examples below are used in formal language, usually for rhetorical effect, such as in political speeches. They are not usual in everyday spoken language. Compare:

*Never **have I heard** a weaker excuse!*
I have never heard a weaker excuse!

- Time expressions: *never, rarely, seldom*
 These are most commonly used with present perfect or past perfect, or with modals such as *can* and *could*. Sentences of this type often contain comparatives.

***Rarely can a minister** have been faced with such a problem.*
***Seldom has the team** given a worse performance.*
***Rarely had I had** so much responsibility.*

- Time expressions: *hardly, barely, scarcely, no sooner*
 These refer to an event which quickly follows another in the past. They are usually used with past perfect, although *no sooner* can be followed by past simple. Note the words used in the contrasting clause.

***Hardly had the train left** the station, **when** there was an explosion.*
***Scarcely had I entered** the room **when** the phone rang.*
***No sooner had I reached** the door **than** I realised it was locked.*
***No sooner was the team back on the pitch** **than** it started raining.*

- After *only*
 Here *only* combines with other time expressions and is usually used with past simple.

***Only after posting the letter** **did I remember** that I had forgotten to put on a stamp.*

Other examples are *only if/when, only then, only later*.

Note that when *only* refers to 'the state of being the only one', there is no inversion following it.

Only Mary realised that the door was not locked.

■ Phrases containing *no/not*

These include *under no circumstances, on no account, at no time, in no way, on no condition, not until, not only ... (but also).*

On no condition are they to open fire without a warning.

Not until I got home did I notice that I had the wrong umbrella.

■ *Little*

Little also has a negative or restrictive meaning in this sense:

Little does the government appreciate what the results will be.

**Inversion after
so/such with that**

■ This occurs with *so* and adjectives when the main verb is *be*. It is used for emphasis and is more common than the example with *such*.

So devastating were the floods that some areas may never recover.

■ *Such* used with *be* means *so much/so great*

Such was the force of the storm that trees were uprooted.

■ As in the examples with *such*, inversion only occurs if *so/such* is the first word in the clause.

**Inverted
conditional
sentences without
If-**

■ Three types of *If-* sentence can be inverted without *If-*. This makes the sentences more formal and makes the event less likely.

If they were to escape, there would be an outcry.

Were they to escape, there would be an outcry.

If the police had found out, I would have been in trouble.

Were the police to have found out, I would have been in trouble.

If you should hear anything, let me know.

Should you hear anything, let me know.

If he has cheated, he will have to be punished.

Should he have cheated, he will have to be punished.

If I had known, I would have protested strongly.

Had I known, I would have protested strongly.

■ Inversion after *as*

This is more common in formal or written language.

We were short of money, as were most people in our neighbourhood.

I thought, as did my colleagues, that the recession would soon be over.

■ Inversion after *so, neither* and *nor*

These are used in 'echoing' statements, agreeing or disagreeing.

A: *I am going home.* B: *So am I.*

A: *I don't like meat.* B: *Neither do I.*

See Grammar 14 for ways of giving emphasis without inverting after *so*.

Practice

1 Complete each sentence by using the phrases from the box.

Rarely have	No sooner had	Under no circumstances are
Not only did	Under no circumstances will	as did
Were you	Hardly had	Little did
		Rarely have

- a) *Hardly had* we arrived at the hotel, when there was a power cut.
- b) members of staff to accept gratuities from clients.
- c) Detective Dawson realise what she was to discover!
- d) to pay the full amount now, there would be a ten per cent discount.
- e) I supposed, most people, that I would be retiring at 60.
- f) the doctors seen a more difficult case.
- g) Jean win first prize, but she was also offered a promotion.
- h) late arrivals be admitted to the theatre before the interval.
- i) one missing child been found, than another three disappeared.
- j) so many employees taken sick leave at the same time.



2 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

- a) It was only when the office phoned me that I found out about the meeting.

find

Not until *the office phoned me did I find out* about the meeting.

- b) The facts were not all made public at the time.

later

Only all made public.

- c) The response to our appeal was so great that we had to take on more staff.

response

Such to our appeal that we had to take on more staff.

- d) Harry broke his leg, and also injured his shoulder.

but

Not only also injured his shoulder.

- e) The police didn't suspect at all that the judge was the murderer.

did

Little as being the murderer.

- f) The bus driver cannot be blamed for the accident in any way.

held

In responsible for the accident.

- g) If the government raised interest rates, they would lose the election.

raise

Were interest rates, they would lose the election.

- h) As soon as I got home, I realised I'd left my bag in the shops.

had

No sooner I realised I'd left my bag in the shops.

- i) It was only when I asked a passer-by that I realised where I was.

did

Not until where I was.

- j) The minister was interrupted just after starting his speech.

when

Hardly he was interrupted.

3 Decide which sentences are inappropriate in the contexts given.

- a) Guest to host: 'So nice was that pudding, that I would like to have some more.' ...*inappropriate*...
- b) Witness to court: 'No sooner had I turned out the light, than I heard a noise outside.'
- c) News reader: 'Such was the force of the earthquake, that whole villages have been devastated.'
- d) Parent to child: 'Should you fancy a pizza, let's order one now.'
.....
- e) Friend to friend: 'Never before have I seen this film.'
- f) Politician to audience: 'Seldom has the country faced a greater threat.'
.....
- g) Celebrity to interviewer: 'Were I to have the time, I'd go climbing more often.'
- h) Victim to police officer: 'Scarcely had we been introduced when he punched me for no reason.'
- i) Printed notice: 'Under no circumstances is this control panel to be left unattended.'
- j) Colleague to colleague: 'Should you change your mind, just let me know.'
.....

4 Complete each sentence with a suitable phrase containing the verb in brackets in an appropriate form.

- a) Should ...*you need*..... (need) anything, could you let me know?
- b) Were the plane (take off), everyone in it would have been killed.
- c) Had (study) harder, I would probably have passed all my exams.
- d) Should (be) in the neighbourhood, drop in.
- e) Had (go) to the doctor immediately, your daughter would not be so ill.
- f) Never before (spend) so much money on her daughter's birthday.
- g) Should (feel) hungry, just call room service, and order a meal.
- h) Were (offer) her the job, we couldn't be sure that she would accept.
- i) Had (take) the necessary measures, this political crisis could have been avoided.
- j) Scarcely (get) home when the police called us with news of Geoffrey.

5 Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

- Jim promised that he would never/never would he tell anyone else.
- Not until it was too late I remembered/did I remember to call Susan.
- Hardly had we settled down in our seats than/when the lights went out.
- Only after checking three times I was/was I certain of the answer.
- At no time I was aware/was I aware of anything out of the ordinary.
- Only Catherine and Sally passed/did they pass the final examination.
- Only when Pete has arrived/has Pete arrived can we begin the programme.
- No sooner had it stopped raining than/when the sun came out.

6 Complete the text by using the words and phrases from the box.

little	such	not only	under no circumstances	had
seldom	along	no sooner	as	scarcely

Well, ladies and gentlemen, we've done it again – another election victory. The last four years of office has been a wonderful time for the party, a tale of adversity overcome. (1) No sooner..... had we come to office than the Stock Market crashed. But we survived that scare, and we came out of it stronger for the experience. The opposition claimed we were faltering.

(2) have I heard such hypocrisy from a party which continued to squabble internally for the next four years. Then

(3) came a fellow called David Rew, with his new breakaway Democratic party – but he didn't have much success in the opinion polls! (4) did he claim he'd become Prime Minister within three years, he also reckoned that this party was now unpopular with younger voters. (5) did he realise that it would be the young voters who gave us an overwhelming vote of confidence in yesterday's election. (6) had the first votes rolled in when it was obvious that we would be re-elected with a huge majority.

(7) was the extent of our victory that the New Democrats obtained a meagre five seats. (8) they known they would perform so poorly, I don't think they would have been quite so scathing in their criticism of our economic policy. But rest assured, ladies and gentlemen, (9) will we rest on our laurels. There is no room for complacency in this government. And I am confident, (10) I'm sure are most of you, that the next four years will be a resounding success. Thank you.

7 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

- a) Please never ever interrupt me when I'm in a meeting.

am

On no account *am I (ever) to be interrupted* when I'm in a meeting.

- b) Nobody from this school has ever written a better composition.

anyone

Never written a better composition.

- c) Such was the demand for tickets that people queued day and night.

great

The demand for tickets that people queued day and night.

- d) The money is not to be paid under any circumstances.

no

Under to be paid.

- e) Three days passed before we arrived at the first oasis.

had

Not until at the first oasis.

- f) Little did Brenda know what she was letting herself in for.

no

Brenda what she was letting herself in for.

- g) It was only when I stopped that I realised something was wrong.

did

Only that something was wrong.

- h) The accused never expressed regret for what he had done.

time

At regret for what he had done.

- i) Exhaustion prevented any of the runners from finishing the race.

were

So of them finished the race.

- j) It's not common for there to be so much rain in March.

see

Seldom so much rain in March.



SEE ALSO

Grammar 14: Emphasis
Grammar 15: Consolidation 3